Editorial Page

Exploring the ancient find of Devesar

The Sultans and Mughal emperor also visited the site and made it as an important Pargana of their empire

Bronze frame locally known as Barpout found very earlier from Devesar (courtesy SPS MUSEUM Srinagar) Author

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One of the olden memorial stones of ancient Kashmir has been found in a chance discovery in Lanker Pombay Devsar, area of Kulgam district. It is a stone stab depicting male and female human images and horse riders in two panels, holding traditional weapons, while the top depicts another standing figure. Since the archaeologists are investigating the stone slab and its find spot, but I will say this is a significant find in the sense as it carries a scene of certain unknown historical event.

Although technically the images are not so sound and looks to have been carved crudely and also cannot be dated earlier to 18th century AD when sculpture art of Kashmir has been fading away. Indeed the the find does not matter much but the site where from this memorial stone has come matters more.

Let the local archaeologists do their business and investigate the find, and till then we would here like to know the earlier archaeological and historical significance of Devsar.

In fact we have already major archaeology discoveries recorded from Devesar, the ancient Devesarasa. The place as recorded in ancient records has been the ancient seat of learning and a centre of Kashmir bronze art, influenced by the world famous ancient Ghandahara art.

The site is recorded to have revealed few magnificent antiquities of bronze art which included the exquisite sculpture of Lord Buddha of Kushan era and Shankervarmen's bronze frame of 10th century AD.

These artifacts are the masterpieces of ancient Bronze art of Kashmir and stand these days showcased in the Archaeology gallery of the SPS Museum at a Lalmandi in Srinagar.

These two artifacts have become the zenith of this historical museum and have been attracting tourists from far-off lands. These finds are not only mentioned in the local archaeology and museum records but these two artifacts have been

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the local archaeology and museum records but these two artifacts have been mentioned in the international archaeology and art literatures.(these two artifacts are also recorded to have represented Kashmir art in several international art festivals held from time to time in Russia, USA and France).

Devesar, known to its historical records as Devesarsa, is picturesquely located under the foot of pirpanchal on the right bank of nallah Vishu in distric Kulgam. There are several curious events and legends associated with this place. Many of these events are well documented in the annuals of Kashmir history.

Devsar's cultural significance got first revealed in year 1931 when a master archaeological find in the shape of a bronze frame incidentally made its appearance in one of the plateaus of the village. It depicted various images of a Hindu deity and is dated to the period of Shankar Varman.

The king in 10th Century AD is said to have made Devesar its royal seat. Of its earlier antiquities the place besides revealing few artifacts and coins has preserved basement of some miniature structure identified as the remains of Narisema temple.

The bronze frame which besides other incarnations also carries the wonderful incarnation of Surya (the sun God) measures 6' 2" ft. long 4' 4" ft. broad about 1' 2" ft. thick and 3 mounds and four seers in weight. It is oval shaped with its bottom end flattered on its borders it carriers images of Hindu deities. The images are brilliantly casted.

This is the only find of this kind know from Kashmir and described in various leading archaeological books of the world it is on the basis of this find that Devsar's artistic activities of Shankarvarman's period are established.

The Sultans and Mughal emperor also visited the site and made it as an important Pargana of their empire. There is the mention of Devsar in various chronicles and provides description of several ancient events, which have taken place in its plateaus. One of such event recorded in history says that Zawalchu the tyrant invader who entered Kashmir during the period of Raja Suhadeva and spread terror at last have got killed in the plateaus of Devsar.

The event adds that Zawalchi who had killed numerous people and made thousands as prisoners, once asked them about the way leading then to Hindustan,(modern India). He is learnt was shown the Devsar path. The season was winter and the Panchal Mountains had been experiencing heavy snowfall. Zawalchu who had reached on the top of panchal on his way to Punjab, was trapped in the heavy snow and lost his way. He could not bear the ice cold and got killed along with his forces somewhere in Devsar area.

Devsar's historical significance is well established besides its artistic activities. Historians claim that they have got ample evidence to believe that in the ancient times a rich urban civilization flourished at Devesar. Several archaeologists and historians which included PNK Bamzai, R C Kak , Pratapditya Pal and John Siudmak have also earlier studied the finds of Devesar and mentioned those in detail in their respects accounts. I have myself more recently wrote several articles on the Devesar finds and have discussed its historical, numismatic and archaeological significances in my recent books on Jammu and Kashmir, Archaeology and Numismatics.

Although the Devsar from time to time has been reveling its ancient antiquities and artifacts, but the fact remains that Devesar has never been explored scientifically and it is only chance finds which have been making their appearances from its upper lands.

Steps are required to be taken to explore the Devesar plateaus in a systematic manner and on scientific lines. The archaeology department with joint efforts of Kashmir University's history and archaeology departments can take up this joint adventure.

Bronze frame locally known as Barpout found very earlier from Devesar (courtesy SPS MUSEUM Srinagar)

Kushan era Bronze sculpture of Lord Buddha dressed in a Kashmiri style, found very earlier from Devesar, (courtesy SPS MUSEUM Srinagar)

Memorial stone found at Devesar

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